

**WASHINGTON STATE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION  
COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES  
FEBRUARY 24, 2022 9:30AM  
CONFERENCE CALL**

**ATTENDANCE**

**Commissioners:** Deborah Cook, Guadalupe Gamboa, and Jeff Sbaih.

**Staff:** Sharon Ortiz, Executive Director; Cheryl Strobert, Deputy Director; Kristin Lamson, Assistant Attorney General; Selene Garcia, Customer Service Specialist 2; and Deborah Gonzales, Commission Clerk.

**Public:** Shawn Murinko and Marguerite Richard

**OPENING AND WELCOME**

Chair Cook chaired the meeting and called the meeting to order at 9:35A.M.

There was a change in the meeting's agenda. Executive Session and interviews were cancelled and were to be rescheduled.

**MEETING MINUTES**

The January 27, 2022 Meeting Minutes were reviewed and approved.

Commissioner Gamboa motioned to approve the minutes. Commissioner Sbaih seconded the motion, and the motion was carried.

**CASE CLOSURES**

The following cases were pulled prior to the meeting:

Reed, Brian v. Westbay Auto Parts #1

Commissioner Sbaih motioned to approve the cases for closure. Commissioner Gamboa seconded the motion, and the motion was carried.

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT**

Director Ortiz submitted a written report to the Commissioners. The House and Senate budget was released, and funding was allotted for the agency to hire six additional staff. Director Ortiz was optimistic that this would benefit the agency and help in reducing the number of cases currently in the backlog.

## **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR RECRUITMENT PROCESS**

With Director Ortiz's retirement date soon approaching and there being no replacement, Chair Cook recommended that Deputy Director Cheryl Strobert be made Acting Executive Director from March 1, 2021 through March 31, 2021. This will allow time for Director Ortiz to begin handing over her responsibilities to ensure a smooth transition for the next Executive Director once selected.

Commissioner Gamboa motioned for Deputy Director Cheryl Strobert to be made Acting Executive Director. Commissioner Sbaih seconded the motion, and the motion was carried.

The Executive Director recruitment is currently open until the end of March 2022. The two interviews that were scheduled for today will be rescheduled until the following commission meeting in March 2022.

## **AAG UPDATE**

Assistant Attorney General Kristin Lamson provided a brief summary for a case that was transferred from the Commission to the Civil Rights Division with the Attorney General's Office. In the case of *Watkins v. The Elements*, Watkins, who is Black, was operating a business out of their apartment, and there was a White business owner doing the exact same thing and was treated differently.

On February 8, 2022, both parties entered into a consent decree which included a \$142,500 settlement be paid to the Plaintiff. In addition to the payment, the decree also included: a permanent injunction against Respondents creating a hostile environment and discriminatory practices based on race and retaliation in housing; a requirement that Defendant's non-discrimination policy be revised, posted, and distributed; staff would have to undergo fair housing training and adhere to certain reporting requirements; the other individual's business access was to also be terminated; and changes to their policies were made for people trying to run businesses out of their apartments.

The Civil Rights Division wanted to thank the Commission for their cooperation. They also wanted to thank Civil Rights Specialist Heidi Termer for doing a great job on the investigation which really helped their case.

## **PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

Marguerite Richard shared her opinions on the agency's processes.

**2022 COMMISSION MEETING SCHEDULE**

April 28, 2022 at 9:30AM:	Via Conference Call
May 26, 2022 at 9:30AM:	Via Conference Call
June 23, 2022 at 9:30AM:	Via Conference Call
July 28, 2022 at 9:30AM:	Via Conference Call
August 25, 2022 at 9:30AM:	Via Conference Call
September 22, 2022 at 9:30AM:	Via Conference Call
October 27, 2022 at 9:30AM:	Via Conference Call
November 2022:	TBD
December 2022:	TBD

**ADJOURN**

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 10:00AM.

Respectfully submitted by,  
Deborah Gonzales